

It should always have been Hopper by GreyHaven

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Summary:

Set 6 months-ish post season 2, Hopper stops by with beers.

Jopper getting together fluff :)

It should always have been Hopper

Author's Note:

My first fic in this fandom and I'm slightly terrified!
With thanks to [@YumeArashi](#) for beta reading <3

"Bye Mom," Jonathan called from the door.

"Bye Mom," Will echoed him.

"Bye, boys," Joyce called back, smiling as they left. "Have fun at the Wheeler's, best behaviour, d'you hear me?"

They'd already gone and she shook her head. It was safe now. Nothing to worry about - and even if there was, their behaviour would be the last thing on her mind.

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Hopper came round regularly. Usually when he was dropping Jane off to see Will. Sometimes just for coffee. And it was warm and easy and comfortable - and perhaps that was inevitable, really, with so many shared experiences.

So when he stopped over that evening with a pack of beer and that cocky grin he used to wear back when they were teenagers, Joyce had laughed and let him in.

The uniform was all *dependable*, police chief, *grown up*, Hopper but the grin was entirely made up of the young, irresponsible, let's-skip-class, Hopper who had stolen her heart when she was a teenager - back before Lonnie had given her a kiss and a wink and she'd made a stupid decision.

It should've been Hopper. It should always have been Hopper.

"Saw the boys when I dropped Jane off," he said, diligently wiping his feet on the mat before stepping into the house. "Looked like they

were settling down for movies and popcorn."

Joyce smiled and closed the door behind him. "How's Jane settling in?"

"Oh, fine, you know, everything's 'bitchin' but there've been no more... outbursts, and she hasn't run away again. I'm calling it progress. How are the boys?"

"They're good. Really good. Jonathan and Nancy seem to be an item these days which seems to be bringing him out of himself more. And I'm not sure exactly what's going on between both of them and Steve. I probably don't want to know. As long as they're happy, that's all I care about," Joyce ran a hand across her forehead. "Will is...he's quiet, tired, I think. It took a lot out of him. He's enjoying the normality of being able to spend time with his friends again."

Hopper nodded and put the beers in the fridge. He took out two and opened them, passed one to Joyce. She took it, flashed him a smile of appreciation, and led the way through to the lounge. He sat beside her on the couch - close but not *too close*, as though he wasn't entirely sure of his welcome - and fiddled with the label on his bottle of beer for a moment before he looked her in the eye.

"How are you?"

It wasn't a passing question, he genuinely wanted to know. There was something approaching *concern* in his eyes and Joyce had to wonder if he *knew*. If he knew she wasn't sleeping because every time she closed her eyes the images were *right there* and she couldn't escape them. If he knew she still jumped at every half-glimpsed movement and every unexpected sound. If he knew that every time the boys were out of sight her heart rate spiked, her palms sweated and she felt like she *couldn't breathe*.

Maybe he did know. Maybe he knew because he was going through the exact same thing. So she let out a slightly shaky laugh. "I'm fine. About what you'd expect, considering."

He nodded as though he understood. He probably did. He'd been

there too, right by her side through everything, the way he always had been when her life turned to shit. The way she had been for him when he came back to Hawkins.

"How are you, Hop?" She asked, just as softly as he'd asked her.

He lit a cigarette, took a drag, passed it to her before he answered. "It was a hell of a thing, wasn't it? Probably would've turned to drink - more so, I mean - if it hadn't been for Jane. She gives me a reason to be strong. I have to keep her safe, be a father to her."

Joyce passed the cigarette back to him, sharing it drag for drag the way they always had done. She exhaled slowly. "She needs you," she smiled. "She needs someone she can trust, someone to let her just be a kid."

Hopper nodded, crushed the cigarette out in the ashtray. "She's good for me, too. Helps me to be the father I always wanted to be." His voice hitched, just slightly, just enough that Joyce *noticed* before he covered it with a cough.

"Hop," Joyce said softly. Her hand went to his face, cupped his cheek for a moment before she squeezed his shoulder.

He opened his arms to her, inviting, welcoming, and she folded herself against him. She let out a sigh as his arms closed around her. The feeling of safety and strength and *home*.

As his lips touched her forehead - soft, impossibly soft, just a hint of a scratch from his beard - his sigh matched her own. A sigh that spoke of *contentment* and *right* and maybe (just maybe) a tinge of regret that they'd left it so long.

Timing had never been on their side. Not since they were kids and Lonnie had stolen her away. And then her marriage had fallen apart, his daughter had died, his marriage was over and he'd returned to Hawkins a broken man. Not the right time. But now...?

Now they were healing. Both of them, dealing with their own issues in their own way. Issues from their past as well as the hell of the past

eighteen months. Issues that would probably always be there but they *understood* each other in ways that no one else ever could.

Maybe now *was* the time.

Joyce shifted in his arms and there was a soft sound of something that might have been disappointment as he thought she was moving away. It was replaced by a surprised noise as she leaned up, tilted her face towards him to kiss him softly.

A brief brush of lips against lips and she sat back, gazing into his eyes, watching for his reaction, wondering what was written in her own expression.

There must have been *something* because - after a heartbeat of hesitation - he was kissing her, gentle but insistent. He tasted of beer and cigarettes and Joyce was transported back to being sixteen years old and cutting fifth period to share a smoke with him in the parking lot.

She kissed him back.